



pittsburgh independent media center  
www.pittsburghimc.cjb.net

# the wrench

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## What is an Independent Media Center?

The Pittsburgh Independent Media Center came into being late in 2001 as a result of the combined efforts of several local activists- some new to the scene, some tenured veterans, some lurking in the spaces in between.

We are a small collective open to publishing articles by anyone who is willing to write. The focus is obviously radical and progressive politics, a subject that is all too often ignored by the mainstream media (an entity which on the whole has its hands tied by links to corporate interests and political pressure and influence).

We, like the indymedia movement in general, are primarily web-based. The web is the most efficient and effective means we have at our disposal to get activist news out to the activists.

We are currently located on the net at [www.pittsburghimc.cjb.net](http://www.pittsburghimc.cjb.net).

We are in the process of gaining access to the indymedia network as an affiliate.

To contact us, e-mail [pittsburghimc@yahoo.com](mailto:pittsburghimc@yahoo.com). To post an event on our online calendar e-mail [pghimccalendar@yahoo.com](mailto:pghimccalendar@yahoo.com).

The project has begun, so jump on board and help out!

## Protesting the World Economic Forum

*The people converge against corporate globalization*

Marie Skoczylas  
Pittsburgh IMC

"This is what democracy looks like," goes the chant of an anti-globalization protester. And gazing around the demo, democracy seems to take the form of a super encompassing folk fest – hippies from the 60s, cell-phone organizers, red and black diaper babies, drummers with bongos and buckets, good-ole trade unionists, students of all shades and sizes, radical cheerleaders and of course, the black bloc of anarchy. It's a Benetton ad without the sweatshop labor baggage.

But what does reality look like? It comes in the form of a party with a "let's make policy!" theme. And it calls itself the World Economic Forum.

Invites are sent to 3,200 business leaders, politicians, journalists and academics, 1,000 of those consisting of the world's largest corporations including Microsoft, Monsanto, Nike, General Motors and, until recently, Enron. Tickets run about \$30,000 and are otherwise known as annual dues to the private-membership organization. Originally formed in 1971 as the European Management Forum, the Swiss-based group is now a leading proponent of corporate globalization. It's a place for the world's elite to meet behind closed doors at the exclusive Waldorf Astoria to set an agenda for the global economy. For Big Money, it's a chance to be the corporate architect of the recent wave of



*The "Heads of State" loom over demonstrations against the World Economic Forum in New York City in February.*

*Photo by Matt Toups*

economic globalization. For Big Fame and Beautiful People it's a chance to make an appearance and "be seen", possibly putting in a good word for debt cancellation to rationalize any guilt that might arise from attending such an event in the first place. For Big Rulers, such as our very own Dubya and his British buddy, Blair, the WEF can act as a giant middle finger wagging at the United Nations. "We'll show them whose interests the world's future is in!" Bush can whisper gleefully. He knows full well that the WEF's growing clout is beginning to challenge even that of the UN, concerning many critics since the Forum is a private entity accountable to only its members.

But to protesters without the cash to make it to Porto Alegre, Brazil, for the World Social Forum – a meeting for the real majority of global citizens to discuss

alternatives to corporate rule – the WEF is a space to present what democracy should look like, to make visible the growing dissent and draw attention to the truth cloaked beneath mainstream media spin.

Members of the Black Radical Congress, Pitt's Students in Solidarity, the Thomas Merton Center and the Azania Heritage Foundation comprised the almost 50 Pittsburghers that traveled to NYC at the beginning of February to join in solidarity with the 15,000 other voices around the country and the world.

WEF founder Klaus Schwab stated, "As the world's financial capital and the site of the recent terrorist attacks, there could be no better place than New York City to confront [post 9/11] issues." Either that, or the years of protest in Davos, Switzerland, the former mountain resort home of the WEF meetings, caused

## Radical infoshop brings a big idea to life

Andy Mulkerin  
Pittsburgh IMC

Despite lacking a storefront of its own, and operating on a voluntary basis, The Big Idea is growing bigger. The young radical infoshop, which currently operates out of the Mr. Roboto Project in Wilkinsburg, is quickly becoming a staple of the Pittsburgh activist scene while sticking to its voluntary-collective roots.

The Big Idea was conceived late in the spring of 2001, as the brainchild of local activists who had visited other such radical bookstores in other cities. It began with a series of meetings over the summer, during which the framework for the shop was set.

Of the approximately 20 active members of the collective, 13 are trained to work the Big Idea table, which appears at activist events as individual members see fit. "It's a loosely-organized collective.

The members choose when they want to set up, whenever they see fit," explained Eileen Nall, a member of the collective. Much of the tabling takes place at the Roboto venue; the collective also set up shop recently at the People's Army's presentation of "How to Plan A Mass Action."

Collective members refer to the shop as an infoshop rather than a bookstore because the selection is varied. Collective member Deanna Hitchcock estimates that the Big Idea currently has about 70 titles on its shelf, and has carried about 150 different titles in the past. But the shop also carries records, which have accounted for a great deal of sales thus far, and assorted homemade crafts.

In keeping with the anarchist nature of the shop, there is no set procedure as to what will and will not be ordered; instead, members take the initiative to make the purchases.

The Big Idea is operating out of the Mr. Roboto Project until they have about \$2500 in

their coffers, according to collective member Justin Cummings, at which point they hope to open a storefront. Collective members plan to keep the store a not-for-profit voluntary collective, and base its open hours around the members' availability.

In addition to the money made from book and record sales, the Big Idea is the beneficiary of a local music compilation, "Go Down Fighting, Come Up Smiling," put together largely by bands that frequent the Roboto Project.

700 of the CD's were produced, which sell for \$5. The CD has already broken even financially and the Big Idea is beginning now to benefit. The CD can be purchased from the Big Idea or at Brave New World in Oakland.

"We're a *radical* infoshop," explains Hitchcock authoritatively. "That's the basis of our decisions." And what appeals to the ideals of the Big Idea collective seems also to generate interest in the activist community.

### F.Y.I.

For more information on on The Big Idea, e-mail [thebigidea@hushmail.com](mailto:thebigidea@hushmail.com).

For more on the Pittsburgh Social Forum, a local chapter of the alternative to the WEF, contact Dessie Bey at [dbey@fcas.pitt.edu](mailto:dbey@fcas.pitt.edu) or Mongezi Nkomo at [mnkomo@hotmail.com](mailto:mnkomo@hotmail.com), or call the Thomas Merton Center at 412-361-3022.

For more on the Pittsburgh IMC, e-mail [pittsburghimc@yahoo.com](mailto:pittsburghimc@yahoo.com).

## Showing that another world is possible

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Klaus and friends to find a new home in a less protest-prone venue. He failed to mention that Swiss officials banned protests two years ago as demonstrations grew to 1,000 participants. It still didn't prevent "hacktivists" from decoding the WEF computer server to gain credit card numbers, travel information and private cell phone numbers for over 1,000 attendees including Bill Gates and Madeline Albright.

And a September 2000 WEF regional meeting in Melbourne, Australia, drew over 10,000 protesters forcing delays in the meeting as one-third of the delegates were prevented entry into the meeting center. No, the move was purely selfless.

While the over-staffed police were omnipresent, the march went on peacefully, for the most part. Later, the National Resistance Organization reported 40 arrests including an incident in which the police stormed a crowd of peaceful protesters before the parade. Throughout the next day, police were said to have followed and harassed participants, in particular profiling those wearing black. But it could have been worse. And it's sad that we've come to expect it to be.

The mainstream media also noted the lack of violence that weekend. But of course, as spin would have it, this only showed our impotence and lack of ability to make any real impact. But unyielding,

we went out there again and created a vision of a better world, if only for one weekend, knowing that tomorrow we must all go back to our own cities to wage the battle on a local level, using the ammunition stocked from those that were able to attend the World Social Forum. Local efforts will spring up and continue on, such as the Pittsburgh Social Forum that is forming here in our city. We will continue our on-going efforts by targeting the policy and globalization effects that hit home. We'll act in solidarity with those who are targets in other nations. And we'll wait in anticipation for our next chance to demonstrate a better world. April 20th in DC anyone?